Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Planning Begins for the Reuse and Restoration of Coldwater Site.

The public is invited to an informational open house to provide comment on planning for the reuse and restoration of federal property formerly occupied by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Mines. Located near Fort Snelling, Coldwater Spring is an important feature on this 27-acre site.

The open house will be held Monday February 23, 2009 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the auditorium on the first floor of the VA Hospital, located at One Veterans Drive in Minneapolis.

In 2004, the National Park Service began a planning process to determine the future use and disposition of the site. A draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) was published in 2006 exploring numerous ownership and restoration alternatives. After review of public comment and the DEIS, the U.S. Department of the Interior has selected the demolition of the existing 11 buildings and restoration of site to a natural condition with the National Park Service (NPS) assuming management responsibilities as its preferred alternative.

Before making a final decision on future use and management of the site, the Department of the Interior will review a Final Environmental Impact Statement and any public comments received. The Final EIS is expected to be published in June and will be available for public comment for 30 days.

Paul Labovitz, Superintendent for the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, said that "while we won't know details of future use of the property for certain until completing the Final EIS and federal Record of Decision process next summer, we hope to gather public input on site design if the preferred alternative is indeed selected." Planning details of future use of the site now would accelerate completion of work at the site and hasten long-term restoration, he added.

"This site is layered with cultural and historical significance," Labovitz said. "American Indian people and others value Coldwater Spring. The development of Fort Snelling and early

European settlement is tied to this site. Twentieth century mining and mine safety technologies were developed in the buildings located here. Before deciding just how to restore the site and the spring, we want to give the interested public the opportunity tell us what they think," he added. "That's the primary purpose of the February 23 meeting."

National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff will be available to provide information concerning the site and its significance, and to gather input to guide planning for the future reuse and restoration of the site.

The site formerly housed the Twin Cities Research Center of the Bureau of Mines and is located between Highway 55 and the Mississippi River, just south of Minnehaha Falls Regional Park. The research center was closed by Congress in 1995. The site is also within the Fort Snelling National Historic Landmark and the Fort Snelling National Register of Historic Places District.

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